

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### Jones Metal Products Inc

Minnesota Technology Inc.

#### MTI Helps Jones Metal Increase Sales With New Software

##### Client Profile:

Founded during World War II, Jones Metal Products, Inc., of Mankato, Minnesota, has grown from a small shop with four workers and a single client to one of southern Minnesota's premier contract metal fabrication shops. The company boasts sales of \$11.5 million, and employs more than 100 people in its 117,000 square foot facility. The firm's customers include manufacturers of power-generation and industrial equipment as well as heavy-equipment manufacturers serving the construction industry. Its clients include several Fortune 500 companies.

##### Situation:

Jones Metal Products' existing computer system had been installed in the late 1980s. While useful in many ways, the system used Monolith hardware and could not be run from multiple desktop computers. In addition, its PIC-based software could not communicate well with other programs. The company's vendor had limited resources to provide upgrades and enhancements, and the system's unique features made it difficult to learn and operate. The company's system could not interface with CRM tools, estimating tools and was "not user friendly," according to company president Douglas Belmore. Jones Metal needed to replace both the hardware and software. The company wanted to improve its scheduling and costing procedures. It also wanted a system that would allow the company to mine data more effectively in order to make better marketing and business decisions, as well as a system that would communicate with other programs. The firm also needed a system with relatively easy installation and training. In 2002, Jones Metal determined to replace the system and sought help from Minnesota Technology, Inc. (MTI), a NIST MEP network affiliate, in determining its software and hardware options and evaluating potential solutions.

##### Solution:

Previously, Jones Metal Products had used MTI services to improve its strategic planning, marketing and web site. MTI business consultant Kent Myhrman introduced the company to the Soft Select program, a computer application that assesses and prioritizes a company's computing needs. Based on 4,500 questions about operations, finances, customer relations and other issues, Soft Select helped Jones Metal determine its most pressing needs and helped narrow the firm's choices. Myhrman and the company identified a software system, JobBOSS, that seemed to offer the needed functions and features. However, they tested several other possibilities to determine the company's best choice. JobBOSS was designed for order-based businesses, like Jones Metal, and the company was pleased with its relatively easy installation and on-line training features. "It was pretty much what we needed right off the shelf," says Belmore. The company spent about \$60,000 on the new software and hardware to run it.

The firms saw almost immediate results, including: 1) reduced error rates as a result of greater visibility of jobs and processes; 2) improved scheduling and production because the system allows the company to attach files and drawings to orders, easing the production process; (3) better financial

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

controls and information; and 4) more in-depth information about customers. "It gave us a chance to look at data and make some important decisions about which customers to go after and which customers to lose," says Belmore. Another result was increased revenue. "The program has already paid for itself," says Belmore. The company's revenues increased from \$8 million last year to more than \$11 million this year. While Belmore attributes some of that increase to an improving economy, the new software system has significantly improved the company's ability to control costs, focus on higher-profitability clients and take advantage of opportunities.

### Results:

- \* Reduced error rates as a result of greater visibility of jobs and processes.
- \* Improved scheduling and production.
- \* Better financial controls and information
- \* More in-depth information about customers.
- \* Increased revenues from \$8 million to more than \$11 million in one year.

### Testimonial:

"The assistance we got from Minnesota Technology took a lot of randomness out of what can be a confusing process. If you try to do this alone, you just get too much information, too fast. The program MTI helped us select was not the most expensive one out there, but it was the best choice for us. Currently, we believe we are using only 20 to 30 percent of the functionality of the software. We expect to get even more out of it in the future."

Douglas Belmore, President